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ILLINOIS LEGIS. SENATE. 14TH ASSEM. 1ST SESSION.

THE MEMORIAL

OF A

COMMITTEE OF THE STATE SCHOOL CONVENTION,

HELD AT PEORIA IN OCTOBER LAST,

UPON THE SUBJECT OF

COMMON SCHOOL EDUCATION,

DECEMBER 7, 1844.
Laid on the table, and 5000 copies ordered to be printed for the use of the two Houses.

SPRINGFIELD:
WALTERS & WEBER, PUBLIC PRINTERS.

7 1845.

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Feb. 4. 1930

MEMORIAL

IN BEHALF OF

COMMON SCHOOLS.

To the Honorable the Senate and
House of Representatives, of the State of Illinois:

The undersigned would most respectfully represent to your honorable bodies, that a State Convention of the friends of common school education was held at Peoria in October last; and after much debate, it was determined unanimously to pray the Legislature to so modify the school system of the State, as to engraft upon it the following plan:

PLAN OF THE PEORIA CONVENTION.

1st. That there be one general State superintendent appointed by the Governor, who shall have a liberal salary to be paid out of the State Treasury, who shall visit all the counties of the State so far as practicable, address the people on the subject of common schools, confer with county superintendents as to the best mode to be adopted and learn from them the condition of the schools within their respective counties, and report the result of his labors to the next General Assembly and suggest such amendments and alterations as he may deem necessary to perfect a general system of common schools.

2d. The school commissioners of the several counties may be authorized to act until the 1st Monday of August, 1845, as county superintendents, who shall, with the aid of some competent person or persons, examine teachers and give them certificates if qualified to teach; shall visit the different towns in his county at least twice a year in person or by some suitable substitute, address the people on the subject of common school education, and give such advice as he may deem for the best interest of the schools, in accordance with his instructions from the State superintendent, and report faithfully the condition of the schools in his county to the State superintendent.

3d. At the June term of the county commissioners' court, A. D. 1845, said court shall appoint a county superintendent who shall hold his office for —— years. After the first appointment the county superintendent shall be appointed by the township trustees at some specified time, and if

they neglect to make such appointment it shall be done by the county commissioners' court.

4th. Each township shall be considered a school district, the qualified voters of which shall elect by ballot three competent householders to act as school trustees for the township who shall sub-divide the township into school districts to suit the convenience of the inhabitants if necessary, and visit the several schools in the town at least twice a year, give directions as to the manner of teaching, the books, apparatus, &c. to be used in the schools—all in accordance with the instructions of the county superintendent; provided, that no district shall be created that shall contain less than twenty families.

5th. If a township shall wish to organize as for the purpose of receiving and managing their own funds, the trustees may do so by appointing one of their number president, another secretary, and a third treasurer, to give bond and security to be approved by the county superintendent, shall pay over to the treasurer on the order of the trustees, all funds belonging to said township, and the county collector shall pay over to the treasurer of said township all moneys collected by him for the benefit of said township for school purposes. After the first Monday in August, 1845, the office of school commissioner shall be abolished, and the county superintendent of common schools shall discharge all the duties now enjoined by law on said officer.

6th. The interest of the school fund in possession of the State shall be divided among the several counties, *pro rata*, according to population.

7th. The county superintendent shall have charge of all the funds of the county for school purposes, whether derived from the State, from the sale of the sixteenth section, or from taxation, and pay out the same according to law.

8th. When a district shall have been formed by the town trustees, the inhabitants of said district shall elect annually three district directors to hire teachers, certify to their schedules, appropriate the tax, and superintend the building and repairing of school houses, and take all needful supervision of the schools. A majority of the inhabitants of a school district may vote to raise a tax for purchasing, building, or repairing school houses, and to defray the expenses attendant upon the schools.

9th. The teachers to keep a faithful schedule of the attendance of all scholars, the correctness of which is to be certified to by the directors, upon which schedule the teacher shall draw his proportion of the public funds, *pro rata*, according to the number of days in attendance by the scholars.

10th. No teacher to be allowed any proportion of the public funds if he has not passed an examination and received a certificate to teach; and no school district shall be allowed any portion of the fund which does not keep up a regular school at least three months in the year.

11th. On the application, in writing, of six householders to the trustees of any township in the State, the said trustees shall be authorized to call an election of the qualified voters of said township, giving reasonable notice of the time and place, to vote for or against levying a tax on the property in said township, for the support of common schools. If a majority of the legal voters present at said election shall vote in favor of a tax, the trustees shall certify the same, together with the amount to be raised, to the clerk of the county commissioners' court, who shall assess the same

on a separate list from the county tax. The county collector shall collect the same in par funds, and pay it over to the county supervisors, &c., who shall disburse it on the order of the trustees of said township.

The above embodies the principal changes which the convention thought best to attempt at the present session; and without a dissenting voice, they considered them essential, in the main, to the sustaining of an efficient common school system, and in conformity with the instructions of the convention, we would ask permission to lay before your honorable bodies some of the reasons why a change of system is desired, and some arguments in favor of the above plan; premising that the convention distinctly disavowed all attempts to dictate legislation; acting only upon the principle, that the legislature would consent to examine the views of other friends of education, who could only by this method bring them forward.

PUBLIC WELFARE AFFECTED BY EDUCATION.

Education is a measure, not merely affecting individual welfare, but one in which the public—the State—is concerned. Were the consequences of its neglect or attention confined entirely to individuals as they should be uneducated or educated, it might be questionable whether society could rightly interfere in its direction. But it is far otherwise. Our social organization, to use a familiar illustration, is a partnership, in which the affairs are generally prosperous or the reverse, according as the partners are good or ill managers. As in ordinary partnerships, the losses do not fall solely upon the mismanaging partner, but upon all concerned; so it is in the great partnership of society, and although the evil consequences of having one ignorant man in an intelligent community, may be trifling to each individual, yet all are more or less affected thereby, and it is for their interest, and their just right, to get rid of him or of his ignorance.

Again, in our social organization we have submitted ourselves to be governed upon republican principles. By our votes we elect our rulers, and the vote of one counts equally with that of any other. Howsoever important, then, a good government may be, it is not more so than that we have good voters. The former necessarily depends upon the latter. Can we expect to have free, independent voters, if unqualified to judge of men and measures? Can they be elevated above the influence of intriguing demagogues of party, unless of their own knowledge they are able to decide correctly as to plans of public policy to be pursued, and to choose wisely between candidates to carry them out? Evidently, to make good, trustworthy voters, they must be educated.

TO LEGISLATE CONCERNING IT IS THEREFORE RIGHT.

The public—the State—then, is deeply concerned in the education of the people; and in any matter, so vitally affecting the public welfare, it is right for the majority to enforce their will by good laws. It is undoubtedly wise in our rulers,—the appointed guardians of the public welfare—and their bounden duty, to adopt those measures which are best calculated to diffuse knowledge most extensively, both throughout the present and succeeding generations, and thus perpetuate the blessings of civil and religious freedom—and experience and observation alike demonstrate

that the object can only be attained, by establishing and maintaining common schools. They are emphatically "the people's colleges." Even in the older and more wealthy sections of the Union, not one in twenty of their population, ever enter a college or academy; and many years must elapse before they will exist in sufficient numbers in Illinois, to educate even that proportion. To create a system of common schools, that shall bear equally upon all classes of citizens in proportion to its benefits; that shall be put in uniform practice throughout the State; and that shall be improved from time to time as experience shall direct; is, then, second in importance to no duty devolving upon our Legislature.

CHANGE OF PRESENT SYSTEM NECESSARY.

That our present school laws are insufficient to accomplish the objects of their enactment, requires no argument to prove. Our schools evidently are not what they should be. There is a listless apathy concerning them, more to be deprecated than fiery opposition, reigning almost supreme throughout the State. We need the adoption of some measures that shall arouse us from this death-like stupor, that shall infuse vigor into the frame, & induce to healthy, steady, persevering action. By some means the people must be made *to feel* that their most vital interests are at hazard, and that no slight efforts will suffice to secure them. It must be brought home to them—they must realize in all its force the truth which all are ready to acknowledge,—that not only the dearest interests of time, but in a good degree the means of preparation for eternity, for their children and their children's children, are based upon a good system of instruction as furnished in our common schools.

As previous legislatures have endeavored to promote education, so doubtless will the present; and though no better or more ardent friends of the cause can be found, than those who have aided in enacting the present laws, yet it is reasonable to expect improvement of them at your hands. You have the experience of the past to profit by; and we confidently hope you will succeed in establishing a common school system, better adapted to our varied circumstances and wants, and that shall receive the cordial approbation and support of the people.

Illinois is peculiarly situated, and in the minor details of a system, we must depend mainly upon our own experience, and the knowledge of our own condition and necessities. Here we can find little amongst the systems of the old States to profit us. We have township as well as State funds, for the use and preservation of which we are to provide; there are the towns and villages; the sparse settlements of the prairies; the scattered ones along the edges of large groves; the comparatively thick ones around small groves, often embracing parts of several townships;—all these varied circumstances, with numerous others, are to be considered, and there is little in the old States of like character. Yet in the leading features, we may with profit examine into the *modus operandi* of older States. In this department, what is found efficacious elsewhere, will prove so here. They have expended many years of labor and much money in perfecting systems, and their united voice bespeaks the necessity of establishing certain fundamental principles; and it would be unwise and improvident not to avail ourselves of experience so costly and so sure.

A STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

The first of these chief provisions, as recommended by the Peoria Convention, is the creation of the office of State Superintendent of public instruction. Other friends of education, ought, perhaps, to rest satisfied with the able advocacy of this measure by his Excellency, the Governor, in his message to your honorable bodies at the commencement of the session. But believing it to be of the highest importance that this office should be created, we shall not we trust, be considered too obtrusive, if we dwell at greater length upon the reasons in favor of the measure, and anticipate some of the results that would probably follow its adoption.

To have an efficient system of public instruction, one of the first requisites is to have an efficient superintendence. We need a central power like the heart to the human system, to keep the works in motion; and to have a regular communication established by intermediate agents between the heart and the extremities—between superintendent and people; an arterial circulation to supply instructions and advice to under officers, teachers, and parents, and veins to convey information of successes and failures, and of required improvements, to the superintendent. Here has been a prime, and a sufficient cause of failure, in the operation of our school laws. Suitable provisions have not been made to procure statistics and information of various kinds to lay before the Legislature, and without which enlightened legislation could not be expected; and our legislators have calculated too much upon the influence of private, individual advantages in having good schools, and have not attended to awakening an interest in regions, and in particular cases, where education was not justly appreciated, and to enforcing the laws where they were neglected.

THE OFFICE IN OTHER STATES.

In seven States, and probably in others with whose school systems we are unacquainted, they have this officer, and the appointment has been frequently urged by governors of several other States in their legislative messages. In Kentucky and Massachusetts the office has existed for eight years. In Michigan it is engrafted upon the constitution, as it is also in Iowa; and in New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania, the Secretary of State, and in Virginia the second Auditor, are *ex officio* superintendents, employing extra clerks to assist in discharging the duties.

In every State where the office has existed, rapid improvements in schools have followed its creation; and on the other hand, in nearly every State where the office does not exist, and has not, there is a lamentable deficiency in attention to popular education. Illinois is no exception to this. Our own experience calls negatively for the creation of the office; for we have had no superintendent, and our school system has accomplished little. There are, however, two or three of the New England States, where the children are well educated, and I believe have never had this officer. But how different their condition from ours! The people there are assimilated in their views and habits. One generation has succeeded another, adopting the measures of their fathers, with such improvements as experience has required. But here, we are thrown together from the ends of the earth, with views and habits as varied as our ori-

gins. Surely, no similar characteristics exist at present to warrant us in dispensing with such an officer, because New Hampshire and Maine have none. When the character of Illinois shall be as permanently established; when its children shall be as well instructed, as in these time-honored States, we, too, may enjoy a good system of public instruction without a superintendent; though even then it may be desirable to follow the example of other States, as experienced—as wise in their school management—and retain this officer. But till then, at any rate, let us have him.

When we consider the importance of the trusts, for the management of which we ask that this office may be created; the important duties to be performed, which will be almost wholly neglected without a superintendent; it appears strange—unaccountable—that men; so provident, so clear sighted in other public measures, should so long have neglected to adopt this. It will not be denied, that this subject of popular education is chief of all the measures entrusted to legislative and executive care; is it too much then to ask that a minister be appointed, specially to attend to its interests?

STATE SCHOOL FUND MADE MORE USEFUL.

A large amount of public money is expended annually in its support; for the past two years greater than any other item of State expenditure; is it not the part of wisdom to appoint an agent to see what becomes of it; whether it be so used as to accomplish the greatest possible good? What other public appropriations have ever been made, and no care taken of the expenditure? In granting money for the canal, the State house, and all other public works, it has been regarded a matter of economy, to employ, at great expense, capable and faithful men to direct its use; but when we come to school money, $50,000 can be expended annually, and the proposition, to employ in like manner an agent to watch this, is put down by the hue and cry of—the expense!

But farther, this school money some regard as peculiarly the people's with which the Legislature have nothing to do except to distribute it. The people may use it as they see fit, to support good schools or bad, and neither the Legislature or its agents have any right to inquire, why do ye so? Never a greater mistake. The school fund is a sacred trust, committed to the State by Congress for the promotion of common schools; and it is no more a breach of that trust to pervert it from its specific use, than to fail to use it in the most faithful manner. By every principle of honesty the Legislature is bound to spare no effort to ensure its most judicious management and expenditure; and it being a notorious fact, that a large part of it accomplishes slight results compared with what it should, is it not the least they can do to appoint some one to look after it?

ENHANCED VALUE OF TOWNSHIP FUNDS.

But the effort of a superintendent's labors will not be confined to the State funds. There are, besides, the township funds, the use of which would be equally modified. The school lands amount to about 1,000,000 acres; and suppose two-thirds of them to have been sold, and to have brought but $3 per acre, that would give $2,000,000. This is loaned upon interest, mostly at ten and twelve per cent.; but at six per cent., it

would give $120,000 annually, more than twice the amount of the State appropriation. They are township funds, to be sure; but were granted by the same power and for the same object, for which the State fund was created, and their management is in a measure committed to the legislature. May not your honorable bodies, then, with propriety—would it not be expected of you, to adopt every consistent measure to increase their usefulness?

HIS AID TO THE LEGISLATURE.

Permit us also to suggest to your honorable bodies, the advantages you would yourselves derive from the services of a superintendent. Education in all its details would be with him a constant study; and besides learning what he could from people at home, he would be procuring information from abroad, and familiarizing himself with improvements and the practical operation of systems adopted in other States. In his travels, he would meet the friends of education as the appointed agent of the State; and they would lay before him the condition of schools amongst them, the operation of the law—its advantages and defects, and recommend improvements which appeared to them desirable. The returns of school districts, and reports of under officers throughout the State, would also be made to him; and when the Legislature was convened, from this storehouse of experience and facts, he could draw rich supplies of information to lay the basis of enlightened legislation; and we can conceive of no other feasible method of procuring such knowledge, so absolutely essential to the perfecting of a school system.

And should not the Legislature be informed as to the results of their legislation? Surely if their system works well, they should know it. If alterations be required they should know it. The instruction of two hundred thousand children annually, is not a matter of such slight moment, as that the passage of a few laws relieves the Legislature of all responsibility concerning it. As good rulers, they will not only legislate wisely, but they will adopt measures to learn with certainty the effects—whether the law be complied with, and the consequences. To attain this end, what better course can be adopted, than to employ a faithful superintendent, qualified to discharge the duties?

HIS SPECIAL INFLUENCE IN PARTICULAR REGIONS.

Again; in some regions the law would not be so carefully practised upon as in others; and if what it should be, according to its observance would be the character of the schools. An important part of a superintendent's duties would be, to seek out these regions, and induce them to pay closer attention to the requirements of the law; the spirit as well as the letter. In districts where nothing has been attempted, simply because no one cared for education, and in other districts, where the money received from the State, together with the proceeds of the township funds, have been injudiciously expended, and no efforts made to provide other funds for school purposes, however much needed; how effective might have been the labors of a wise, energetic superintendent in arousing to action—causing parents to acknowledge and feel how dependent are the prosperity and happiness of their children upon the cultivation of their heads hearts; and while setting the people at work, aiding them at the

same time to procure good schools. Who, conversant with the facts, can doubt, that if at a cost of several thousands of dollars, a complete supervision could have been established, in years past; more, much more would have been accomplished in behalf of education, even if the expense had been defrayed entirely from the school fund.

When not necessarily employed otherwise, he would be expected to travel throughout the State, attending conventions of school officers, teachers and parents, delivering addresses, conversing upon the subject in public and private, and by every means in his power, diffusing information among the people, and inciting them to greater exertions. That he will be able at once to raise to a high pitch the public feeling, and cause the adoption of every measure necessary to the immediate and universal spread of education, is not to be expected. There are in Illinois about one hundred counties; and the superintendent would have to labor early and late—no man in the State would work harder—if, in addition to his numerous other duties, he visited each county, and delivered in it, say two lectures, within two years. He must have good health, a strong constitution, to be able to do it. Of course, much would remain unaccomplished after his first tour; yet who can estimate the influence he would exert in controlling and forming public sentiment, even by these two years of hasty labor!

Having passed over the whole ground once, he would then select those counties where his labors were most necessary; and if possessed of the right character, every district through which he passed, would show the effects of his visit. Public attention would be directed to schools; parents and teachers be made to regard them as they never did before; prejudices against new measures be surmounted; and the whole population be speedily roused to united, concentrated action. Oh, when shall we see so desirable, so glorious a movement!

HIS GENERAL INFLUENCE THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

To have this influence exerted upon the people generally, is indeed, one of the strongest reasons for the appointment. To awaken public interest—to break up this awful lethargy, lies at the foundation of all improvement. How utterly useless is it for the Legislature to amend the laws, and attempt to perfect a system, if its measures be neglected by the great mass! Were the people alive to the importance of common schools, ready to hail with joy every advancing step in improvement; yet in the diversity of opinion that prevails, founded upon previous views and habits, it would be no slight work, if any great alterations were made in the law, to explain its bearings, and bring it into general operation. But, alas! it is too certain that to explain the law, will be the least difficult part of a superintendent's labors. To arouse to action—to make the great mass of the people feel that their children must be educated,—to induce them to act vigorously under any system,—will be a work ten fold more arduous. Did one in twenty of the legal voters rightly value education, think you our schools would be what they now are? Would they rest satisfied with their present condition, coolly waiting an improvement in the State system? No; here is the burthen of the labor—to bring home to the great majority, the necessity of educating their children—of

providing good schools—and make them understand how much they have to do personally in procuring the means.

Could funds be provided to defray the expense, it would unquestionably be the part of wisdom, to employ several men of suitable qualifications, to labor in this cause. The importance of the work; the necessity of its being expedited as rapidly as possible, would sufficiently warrant it. But in the present crippled condition of our State Treasury, and our other resources for school purposes being so limited, it is not to be expected, neither do we ask for it. But, because all cannot be done that appears desirable, shall nothing be done? Shall we deprive ourselves of all the benefits of an able superintendence, because it is out of our power to employ sufficient force to perform the duties as rapidly as we would like? Folly this! Let all due diligence be employed to hasten the work, and attain the ends as speedily as possible; but let us make sure that the work be accomplished at some time.

SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES.

There are, then, these five reasons for creating the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, either of which appears sufficient to warrant it.

1st. That the State should have an authorized agent, as in other public appropriations, to see that its money is rightly applied, and made useful in the highest degree.

2d. That the usefulness of the township funds would be greatly increased.

3d. That the Legislature may be supplied with reliable information concerning the operation of the law, the condition of schools throughout the State, the plans and wishes of the people, and the improvements made elsewhere; all of which is necessary to enlightened and permanent legislation.

4th. The advantage of an agent to operate in particular regions, where the greatest apathy prevails.

5th. The necessity of enlisting a more general interest in common schools; the surest and best method of doing which, is to send a man of the right character, through the length and breadth of the State.

Other advantages present themselves, which we must not dwell upon for lack of room. He would call together, in convention in different parts of the State, under officers, teachers and friends of education from several adjoining counties, affording opportunities to become acquainted, and for all to avail themselves of the experience and improvements of others. He would examine teachers and visit their schools; and to those of great excellence, he would grant honorary certificates, qualifying them to teach in any school in the State. Such certificates would be highly prized, and prove a stimulus to numerous teachers to improve their own minds, and acquire greater ability to instruct. He might, with advantage, be permitted to make honorary appointments, of one or more persons in a county, to aid the county superintendent in his labors, and with his approbation, of course; their services to be wholly gratuitous. He would apportion the school money of the State; supply the school law, with his instructions, to under officers; prepare and distribute blank forms, for making school returns to his department; give aid and advice when de-

sired; and act as general peacemaker in settling difficulties concerning school matters.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE OFFICE.

To discharge the duties of this exalted office—faithfully, and with credit and usefulness to the State, the incumbent must be no common character. In the apposite language of the Governor, "he must be a rare man, endowed with talents, zeal, and discretion of the highest order."—His zeal, too, must be "according to knowledge." He should possess general information, with agreeable manners; independence of thought and action, without being over-bearing. Especially should he have good oratorical powers; be able to deliver a plain, practical address off hand. With the subject of education, he should be familiar in all its parts, by experience as well as theory—should have been a teacher;—should have become acquainted with the habits and manners of the West, by a residence of several years;—should be possessed of energy and perseverance with good business habits. His morals and integrity should be above suspicion; yea, more,—he should be a christian. No bigot—no sectarian—not necessarily even a member of any church—yet a christian. Love—the essence of pure religion,—love to God and love to man—should be the ruling principle of his life.

COMPENSATION.

The services of such a man will not be commanded for a trifle; and while we do not desire for the office an extravagant salary, yet we would ask that it may be made sufficient to accomplish the object. In other States and in foreign countries, their ablest men have filled this office, and the object is worthy of man's best energies; and here in Illinois, where so much is to be required, to have an inferior man for superintendent, would prove a total failure of the enterprise. He must be second to no other officer of the State; and to offer a small remuneration, so that no one competent to the task will accept the appointment, will entirely defeat the object, and the expenditure prove useless. As to the amount, we would not dictate. In Kentucky, the salary is $1,000; what it is in other States, we know not. We would, however, barely suggest that he be paid like other State officers, out of the treasury. The small income of the school fund is required for other school purposes, and much more is desirable; and if our previous positions have been sustained, there can be no impropriety in thus paying him; for an officer of more essential service to the State, than he is or should be, does not live. But if the expense fall upon the school fund, it should by no means defeat the enterprise. More will be accomplished with the remainder, under the management of an able superintendent, than with the whole as heretofore used.

SHALL THE EXPENSE DEFEAT THE MEASURE.

We have examined some of the arguments in favor of the measure, and what is there to oppose? Not a single objection can be urged, except the expense. And shall a thousand or twelve hundred dollars a year, be put in competition with the accomplishment of a work of this mag.

nitude? Our common schools accomplish not a tithe of what they should, yet our prosperity depends upon making them useful in the highest degree; and numerous enlightened statesmen and teachers—thousands of the most zealous, talented friends of education throughout the State,—ask the creation of this office as not only a certain method of improvement, but the only one that can be devised; and upon the result, if the appointee be rightly qualified, they are willing to stake their reputation for good judgment. Shall the cost, so trifling in comparison with the object in view, cause a defeat of the plan? It is indeed to be regretted that we are so illy able to incur the expense; but some State expenses must be met, notwithstanding our embarrassment, among which are the pay for executive, legislative and judicial services; and with these we would class a superintendent. This is no extraordinary project—no superfluity, which it might be well enough to have, if we could afford it; but a necessary—a measure demanded by the exigencies of the case. We cannot—must not—do without it. As his Excellency well remarks, "money expended on such an agency, if ably, faithfully and zealously executed, would be approved by the people as being more for their benefit, than any other appropriation whatever. And if taxed for it, they would feel that they had been taxed for a purpose of the highest utility."

APPOINTMENT BY THE GOVERNOR.

His Excellency recommends the appointment to be made by the legislature, but there are one or two reasons for leaving it with the Governor. It will be difficult to secure a suitable person; and obviously, the entire success rests here. Of the whole herd of office seekers, who would be hanging upon your buttons, the moment there was any probability that the office would be created, not one should be appointed. He belongs not to that class; and time and opportunity should be given to hunt him out at home, where he would probably be found attending to his own business. Should the power of removal be granted, as would probably be judicious, it would be most irksome for his Excellency to exercise it upon one elected by the Legislature; and without intending any disrespect to your Hon. bodies, permit us to ask, if it would not be better to throw the responsibility of the appointment upon one person entirely, rather than have it divided between one hundred and sixty?

TO THOSE OPPOSED TO THE OFFICE.

In concluding this part of our memorial, we have one word to say to the ardent friends of education who may oppose us. We lay no claim to having all the wisdom and zeal on our side. Several differ from us, who have shown by former efforts, their sincere desire to promote this great cause. But we would ask of them as a particular, as a great favor, to waive their objections and yield their own plans, giving this their cordial support, even if they think some other measure less expensive might be devised. Till now we have not had the office, and all acknowledge the necessity of working a change;—let our plan be tried for a year or two and watch the consequences. If found not to answer the purpose, the law can be repealed at the next session, and the experiment

will not be very costly. Please not only withhold opposition, but give us your hearty support.

COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT.

The next measure proposed by the convention is, to change the duties of the present school commissioner, (or rather to increase them,) the method of his election, and his title. For the same reasons, in the general, that we ask for a State superintendent, do we desire county superintendents; and the value of their services will appear, as we examine some of the duties proposed to require of them.

EXAMINATION OF TEACHERS.

A most important duty for him to perform, and one greatly neglected at present, is the examination of teachers. Notwithstanding the high trusts committed to their charge, in nine cases out of ten the applicant for a school is not half so closely examined, as he would be if he sought mechanical employment. To work in wood or stone, the employer will know the skill and experience of the one he hires; but immortal minds by scores can be committed to the charge of the first person who can be found without other employment, and almost the first and last, and only question asked will be, 'how cheap will you do it?' Can any thing be more absurd? Here is a man employed to give impress to the plastic minds of youth, never to be effaced through all time;—yea, more—it lasts through the unceasing ages of eternity, and the only qualification required is,—*to do it cheap!*

These teachers to a great extent, are preparing your voters—qualifying those who in a few fleeting years, are to fill the offices of Government and direct the car of State;—is it not the duty of the Legislature to do all they can to ensure the employment of good, competent, faithful persons? Much can be done on this point, by providing for their rigid examination, and that no school shall receive aid from the State appropriation, in which a teacher is employed who has not a legal certificate of qualification. Some might consider this hard, and that the Legislature was interfering in what was none of its business. But is it so? Setting aside the undoubted right of the Legislature to direct in a matter so vitally affecting the public good, let it be remembered, that it is the money entrusted to the State by Congress, to be used in the best possible manner to promote education, that is withheld; and can the State do less than withhold it, where they know it will be worse than squandered? There is no compulsion in the matter. If parents choose to employ an incompetent man, they can do it; but, should they be paid for it by the State?

For several reasons it is desirable to have the examination given to one person, and that the county superintendent. It is difficult to find in every district or township, a person qualified for the task, who will attend to it. Incompetent teachers will be less likely to obtain certificates through favor or affection, if examined by a single county officer, than if examined by township or district officers, who, in numerous instances, would be friends and neighbors of the applicant. In such matters, the public is best served by throwing responsibility upon a single person, and he alone should give certificates, except honorary ones to be given very su-

perior teachers by the State superintendent. He should, however, be permitted at his discretion, to call in the aid of others to assist in examining; and no district would be compelled to employ any teacher whom the trustees should deem incompetent. The discharge of other duties, would give him peculiar qualifications for this; and on the other hand, the acquaintance with teachers which he would thus acquire, would aid him materially in his general endeavors to promote education. When trustees wished to procure a teacher, they could apply to him; and his acquaintance with them, and with the districts throughout the county, would enable him to recommend with advantage, a teacher for a particular school; for frequently a teacher would be found valuable and successful in one school, and fail in another.

Whenever applied to, he should make an examination, and at least one day in March, April, September and October, should be designated, when he will attend at the county seat for this special purpose; and if unavoidably prevented from attending, he should have authority to fix another day, of which suitable notice should be given. To be at this trouble, is not requiring too much of a teacher. At any rate; the public should be guarded against imposition; and there is as much propriety in requiring this of a teacher, as that a lawyer or a physician should be examined and regularly admitted to practice.

GENERAL DUTIES.

The county superintendent will be required to visit every township twice each year, if possible, each school; convene teachers, town superintendents, trustees of districts, and other friends of education throughout his county, at least once every year; go with the State superintendent through the county when he visits it; deliver lectures as often as practicable; get up school celebrations when expedient; apportion the public money to the townships, or schools, and take charge of township funds not otherwise disposed of; make an annual report to the State superintendent, of the general condition of schools in his county, facts of special interest that he may have observed, the practical workings of the system, suggest amendments which he may deem expedient, make extracts from the reports of town superintendents, prepare an abstract of the school returns; and adopt such other measures as he pleases to increase the interest, and enlist the co-operation in the support of schools, of every citizen of his county.

ELECTION—COMPENSATION.

Like the State superintendent, the county superintendent requires peculiar qualifications to discharge these important and multifarious duties. His selection, therefore should be made with great care. The town superintendents would probably be as well qualified as any others to do this, as they would be certain to know all in the county who were active in the cause, and generally would choose with a single eye to zeal, discretion and ability to direct and give impulse to educational movements. The management of school matters should be as far removed from politics as possible; and it will be difficult, if not impossible, to have the election with other county officers in August, without having it more or less a par-

ty vote. Each party will have a candidate, and it is more than is reasonable to expect, that voters will generally divest themselves of party attachments and influences, particularly at such an exciting time of politics, and vote solely for the man best qualified. To hold a county election for this alone, would be too expensive, and the people would not attend; and the best plan next to this that occurs to us, is to have him elected by a majority of the town superintendents, who are themselves elected by the people annually. He should be required to give bond with security, for the faithful discharge of his duties.

To perform the duties of his office faithfully, will occupy considerable time, and he will be put to more or less expense for travelling, &c., which should be paid. The compensation, however, should not be such as to make that the object in taking the office. Love for the cause should be the controlling influence.

THE OFFICE IN NEW YORK.

This feature is borrowed from the New York system; and that able statesman, as well as sound and ardent friend of popular instruction, Col. YOUNG, commends it in the highest terms. After it had been adopted for two years, he says in his report to the legislature as State superintendent of schools, made in January, 1843, "the system of deputy [county] superintendents, is capable of securing, and can be made to secure, the following objects:

"It can produce a complete and efficient supervision of all the schools of the State, in reference as well to their internal management, as to their external details:

"It can be made to unite all the schools of the State into one great system; making the advancement of each, the ambition of all; furnishing each with the means of attaining the highest standard of practical excellence, by communicating to it every improvement discovered or suggested in every or any of the others:

"It can do much towards dissipating the stolid indifference which paralyses many portions of the community, and towards arousing, enlightening and enlisting public sentiment, in the great work of elementary instruction, by systematic and periodical appeals to the inhabitants of each school district, in the form of lectures, addresses, &c.

"It can be made to dismiss from our schools all immoral and incompetent teachers, and to secure the services of such only as are qualified and efficient, thereby elevating the grade of the school-master, and infusing new vitality into the school."

In his subsequent report, of January, 1844, he says: "to their [county superintendents] efforts, is to be attributed to a very great extent, the revolution in public sentiment, by which the district school, from being the object of general aversion and reproach, begins to attract the attention and regard of all. To their enlightened labors, for the elevation and advancement of these elementary institutions, we owe it in a great measure, that new and improved modes of teaching, of government and of discipline have succeeded in a very large proportion of the districts, to those which have hitherto prevailed; that a higher grade of qualifications for teachers has been almost universally required; that parents have been induced to visit and take an interest in the schools; that private and select

schools have been to a considerable extent discountenanced, and the entire energies of the inhabitants of districts concentrated on the district school; and that the importance, the capabilities and extended means of usefulness of these nurseries of knowledge and virtue, are beginning to be adequately appreciated in nearly every section of the State. Collectively considered, these officers have well vindicated the confidence reposed in them by the Legislature and the people, and justified the anticipations of the friends of education."

WHY NOT AS USEFUL HERE?

Has not this system produced the very results for which every friend of education labors? Surely, we are not so dissimilar, in Illinois, from the population of New York, that a cause so efficacious there, shall fail wholly of producing its legitimate effect here. Remember, this is no theoretical speculation, but plain matter of fact. Will not the Legislature try its operation here, and when the members return home, see to it that the right men are appointed? Upon this, as in the creation of the office of the State superintendent, depends the entire efficacy of the measure.

The manner and faithfulness with which the duties would be discharged, would vary much in different counties. But we can conceive of no plan more certain to accomplish the object. If the people will elect good town superintendents, they will be sure to have a good county superintendent; and then if they will sustain his efforts by all necessary exertions on their part, their united efforts must be crowned with success. Some counties will be stimulated to action by witnessing results in other counties, and it is most reasonable to expect that one zealous county superintendent, will operate upon those around him. A generous emulation will ere long spring up, as to who shall accomplish most, and be able to exhibit greatest improvements in teachers, schools, and school houses in his county. The more they achieve, the more engaged in their work will they become, and we shall speedily have a strong band of a hundred men, laboring most efficiently throughout the State, working untold benefits, and at comparatively small cost.

TOWN SUPERINTENDENTS.*

The next favor we ask is, to throw all the responsibility of township management, upon one town superintendent. This also has been proven by experience to be the best course, and a moment's reflection shows the reason. If the people depend upon one man to perform certain duties, they will be more careful in the selection than if they can trust to several. And besides, when a board is created for a specific purpose, if the duties are not more than one can well perform, some one does the work, and yet the responsibility is divided between all the members. Throw the whole responsibility upon this single man, and is it not reasonable to suppose he would take equally as much care in performing the work, and probably a little more, than if he could share the blame of mismanagement with others? And again; a man likes to have the credit of doing well; and if alone in discharging the duties of an office, if well administered, he knows the praise must be his. This stimulus would be partially destroyed by having associates.

*This is changed from the plan of the Peoria convention upon consultation with the commitees on education of the House and Senate.

This feature is also borrowed from the New York system, and we quote again from Col. Young's report showing the effect in practice. "The abolition of the offices of commissioners and inspectors, and the substitution of that of town superintendent, has been universally approved by the people. There is no longer a division of responsibility under which duties can be neglected with impunity; on one man rests the immediate charge of the schools, and their condition honors or disgraces him. Not only is greater rigor and certainty in this manner given to the local administration, but the usefulness of the county superintendent is also greatly increased. By obvious and judicious arrangements, each can powerfully co-operate with the other, combining together the drills, inspections, registers, district examinations, and town celebrations, into a system which shall reach and remedy every evil."

One objection occurs to us, and that is with regard to the formation and change of districts. This duty would devolve upon the town superintendent, and in difficult cases, it would be desirable to have more than one to decide such matters. But this we conceive to be of much less consequence than the advantages of having a single officer, and should there be dissatisfaction with the districts as formed, an appeal might be had, either to the county superintendent, or to three or five other town superintendents, which would be a more impartial tribunal than any to be found in the township.

Except in the examination of teachers, he would be to the town, what the county superintendent is to the county, performing the duties proposed in the fourth and fifth paragraphs of the plan of the Peoria convention, and adopting such other measures as he pleased to improve the common schools in his township.

He should be elected by the people, when party politics will not be likely to interfere, probably in the spring; and should give bond with security for the faithful discharge of his duties. The present system of unincorporated townships it is proposed to dispense with, every township to be incorporated for school purposes whenever the town superintendent shall be elected; the town superintendent to be the incorporation or agent, for all legal purposes. The three per cent. on sales of school lands, and two per cent. on disbursements and money now loaned, now paid the school commissioner would be his; and we would suggest whether it would not be well to leave it optional with the townships to decide by vote at their annual meetings, whether they will allow other compensation and how much, and perhaps authorize two or more townships to employ an agent.

TRUSTEES OF DISTRICTS.

The election of three trustees for each school district, as is now done, completes the official organization desired by the Peoria convention. They should perform the duties at present required of them by law, and others suggested in the eighth paragraph of the Peoria convention. They would examine a teacher who had a certificate from the county superintendent, and employ him or not as they pleased; and for immoralties, discharge him. They would determine whether the district required one or more schools, and divide the children as they thought best. After the first election, would it not be an improvement if only one should be elected

annually so as to have two old members in the board, except when accidental vacancies occurred? There probably would be more stability of management from year to year, which is very desirable.

Your honorable bodies have now before you the official organization of a school system, as desired by the Peoria convention. Simplicity and efficiency have been the two great objects aimed at, and in this plan they are secured. In the State, county and town superintendents, and trustees of districts, is a regular gradation of office; and the lower being in a measure accountable to the higher, and receiving instructions therefrom, gives a oneness, a universality, to the system, which we have not had before. Not an office is asked for which could be dispensed with in this plan; and we can think of no other plan which would employ so few persons, with any probability of having the work accomplished.

Other provisions in the plan demand a word of explanation, but on account of the length to which the memorial is already drawn, we shall dwell upon only one other at any length.

SIZE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

There is a proviso that every district must contain at least twenty families. A similar provision was incorporated in the school law of 1825, and it would be well for us, had it never been repealed. The needless multiplication of school districts, is a great evil, and should be well guarded against. Oftentimes, two or three districts are formed where there should be but one; and in consequence, instead of having one good school, continued a large part of the year, and well sustained, there are several miserable apologies kept open from one to three months out of twelve. Let it be observed, this provision will never prevent the establishing of a new school if necessary, but will effectually preclude the formation of a district too small to afford support to one good school. Had we room, we should like to present some of the reasons in favor of large districts, but can only observe, that in the eastern States the school reports are filled with complaints of the towns being cut up into small districts; and let us avoid this great evil while we may. They are now with difficulty organizing what they term Union Districts, of several small ones, so as to embrace a territory of three or four miles square, in order to have a first rate school for the larger scholars, and then send the little ones to female teachers. All this trouble we can save ourselves, if we will profit by their experience. To go a half or three-fourths of a mile more or less, is no object with a boy ten to fifteen years old, provided he gets to a better school by the means.

An isolated settlement of less than twenty families, might occasionally be set off by itself without any bad consequences resulting; but they can have a school and be attached to a district embracing another settlement.

PUBLIC MONEY DISTRIBUTED ACCORDING TO ATTENDANCE.

In the distribution of the public money, it appears desirable to have a hange. If possible, it should be made to encourage attendance upon chools; and therefore it is proposed to apportion it amongst the teachers according to the number of days' attendance of the scholars. To the county

superintendents, it is proposed to divide it as at present, *pro rata* according to population. In taking the census hereafter, would it not be well to ascertain the number of children between five and seventeen years of age, as the basis of distribution of the public money, to learn how many neglect to attend school, by comparing it with the school returns?

TO PAY BUT HALF A TEACHER'S SALARY.

The school law approved Feb. 7th, 1835, contains the following: "no teacher shall be entitled to receive [from the school fund] more than one-half of the amount due him for services, rendered within the twelve months preceding the first of November, previous to the time of making such distribution," &c. Whenever the money appropriated to the several schools, exceeded the one-half of the amount paid or due the teacher, it was "forever [to] remain as a principal fund, to be denominated "The County School Fund," to be loaned out by the school commissioner of the county as township funds." We are surprised that so wise and far sighted a measure, when once adopted, should have been lost in the change of laws. It could only have been an oversight which will be corrected by your honorable bodies. The only alteration we would suggest is, that the overplus be attached to the township fund of the particular township to which it had been distributed.

TAXATION FOR THE SUPPORT OF SCHOOLS.

We come now to consider finally, the one great requisite of the proposed plan—*taxation*. Each of the other parts are considered essential, yet they are but machinery to work this result. We come out frankly and boldly, and acknowledge the whole system—every effort, is intended only as a means of allurement to draw the people into the grasp of this most awful monster—*a school tax*.

But start not back in alarm. After all, he may not be so terrible as some have perhaps imagined. Used with skill and judgment, and no other power can accomplish what he will; no other can work such changes in your common schools, and it is in vain that we attempt to dispense with his services. All experience throughout the Union is in favor of his employment. We do not, however, propose coercing any to employ him who prefer to let him alone. All we ask is, to give those permission to use him who are so inclined; and others, when they witness his subordination, and power to work for the cause of education, will doubtless desire themselves to try his services.

Our position is, that taxation for the support of schools is wise and just,—that it is, in fact, the only method by which the deficiency for defraying the expenses of popular education, beyond that supplied by the public funds, can be equalised amongst those who should pay it. This we shall endeavor to substantiate, and then ask of your honorable bodies to allow such townships and school districts, as desire, by a majority of their legal voters, to adopt this method of sustaining their schools, the privilege of doing so.

SCHOOL TAX NECESSARY AND RIGHT.

We believe our former position, that education is a public benefit, and indispensable to the welfare of the State, was sustained. It will also be granted, that parents and guardians of numerous children throughout the State, cannot afford them the means of education, and whatever instruction they may receive, must be paid for by others. That the State appropriation is sufficient, no one will contend. The total amount of school, college and seminary funds on the 1st of December, according to the Auditor's report, was $856,100 22, on which the State pays six per cent. interest, amounting to $51,366. Suppose there are only 150,000 children in the State, of suitable age to attend school, between five and seventeen years of age, it would give a little more than 34 cents to each scholar; and if the schools average forty scholars, there would be thirteen dollars and sixty cents to support a school throughout the year! Why, it will not pay incidental expenses, let alone the building and repairing of the school house and the teacher's salary.

TO PAY FOR SCHOOLING THE POOR.

And will it be contended that all the balance shall be supplied by those sending to school? In this event poor parents must keep their children at home, or they must be exempted by law, and payment be forced from others sending to school. The first, it is the effort of all to avoid, and the latter is most inexpedient and unjust.

We acknowledge there is a private—individual—as well as public benefit derived from education, and all who are able should, therefore, be made to pay for it. But the expense of educating all the poor children; who shall pay for this? A large portion of the population have just means sufficient to send their own children to school; and because they desire to educate them to the best of their ability, shall they be ground to the dust by being made to pay for the instruction of their neighbor's children? Many, besides needing the services of their children in daily labor, know not how to incur the expense of schooling; shall they be compelled to keep their children at home by being informed if they send, they must not only foot the bill for their own children, but the more they send, the more they must pay for others? Manifestly it is inexpedient.

If education be a public good, and there are those who must be educated at the expense of others, the expense should fall where it belongs—upon the public. It is wrong to make a portion of the people, no more able than others, pay for what is acknowledged to be for the good of all. Education is no exception to other public benefits. It inures, to be sure, to individual advantage, and what measure of general utility does not? Then let the expense for this, as for other public objects, fall where it belongs—upon the property throughout the State. Any other method of compelling support is unequal—most unjust.

TAX TO SUPPORT THE JUDICIARY RIGHT—A SCHOOL TAX RIGHT.

This, we confess, is not a perfect method of equalising benefits and cost. Some will be required to pay as much or more than others, of equal means with themselves, and yet the latter derive much greater advantages from the outlay. For instance, there are two neighbors worth $10,000 each,

one having half a dozen children and the other a bachelor;—it is claimed to be unjust to make the latter pay equally with the former for the support of the neighborhood school. But let us put another illustration alongside: one of those men has half a dozen important law suits on hand; the other never had a litigated case, and probably never will. To the former a well established, upright judiciary is of the highest consequence, and he should pay towards its support; but where find you the right to tax his neighbor for it? In the fact that it is necessary for the public good that courts should be established. Our social organization depends upon the maintenance of justice—the power of compelling a man to do right to his neighbor. If one man may wrong his neighbor with impunity, another will, and soon "might makes right." There is an end to the innumerable benefits, to obtain which society is organized. Therefore, you tax property interested *pro rata* to cover the expense, and no one doubts its expediency or justice.

And why does not the same principle apply, and with increased force, to schools? Is not education equally important with the maintenance of justice? Where get you your justice except from a knowledge of men and things, of right and wrong; and what is that but education? Not only is education the foundation stone of justice, but of every other pillar of our civil and religious institutions; and while one or more pillars may be removed, and the temple, though weakened and marred in its beauty, still stands; yet undermine the foundation and its fall is inevitable. Nevertheless, show us that it is wrong to tax a man for the support of the judiciary, because he never has use for it, and we will acknowledge it wrong to make those pay for education, who have no children to be educated. Show us a better, more equal method, of defraying the expenses of the judiciary, than an assessment of property, and we will consent to its adoption for the support of schools.

PROPERTY AFFECTED BY EDUCATION, A SCHOOL TAX THEREFORE RIGHT.

We contend further, that the value of property itself, is affected by the supply or deficiency of the means of education, and therefore it is right to assess it to meet the expense. This course is pursued in other public measures, and why should schools be excepted? To construct roads and bridges, property in the vicinity is assessed, no matter who is the owner, and it is considered equitable. The fact of the owner's residing a thousand miles distant, and that he never used or saw the improvement, and probably never will, has no influence. The public need the improvements, and they are of advantage to his property, and therefore he should pay for them; and there is no other method of insuring it, except to levy a tax.* Now, where is the difference between roads and schools? Surely the public need them, and the property in a measure depends upon the means of schooling in the neighborhood. Suppose all means of education in Illinois were abandoned; who would live here, who purchase property? Of all our highways it is most necessary that the highways of knowledge be kept in good repair. And we again repeat, there is no force in the objection, that education is of individual advantage, and should

*In Illinois a different system prevails at present, but this is the most common in other States, and unquestionably the most equitable.

be paid for by those enjoying it. It is no more so than roads. No one asks whether a person uses the road as much as another or not. That is his privilege, and he alone is to blame if he neglects it. Pay for it he must, and rightly too, according to the value of his property in the neighborhood. The same rule we would apply to schools.

SCHOOL TAX JUST TO NON-RESIDENTS.

There is no class upon whom a tax of this kind would press so heavily, or who could so reasonably complain if it were unjust, as non-residents; and being as a class so shrewd, so wide awake to their own interests, if there were any thing wrong in it, they would surely discover it. One of them, the Hon. CHARLES W. ROCKWELL, of Connecticut, who owns a large amount of land about the State, said to the writer, "put on your school taxes. There is no expense I will more cheerfully pay, than taxes for the support of education." Some may consider Mr. Rockwell an extraordinary man, and compared with a resident who takes an opposite view, he is indeed a prodigy of disinterestedness and generosity. But he looks at the matter in a pecuniary light merely; and though he takes a far-sighted, statesman-like view, and as a benevolent, public spirited man delights in seeing education promoted for its ever-increasing benefits to individuals; yet he, like any other man, expects to derive personal profit from tax paying, and for the dollars and cents paid for a school tax, he expects indirectly to get back dollars and cents, with large interest. Neither will he be disappointed. And any man, resident or non-resident, who grumbles at paying a school tax, would get rid of any other tax if he could. You tax to construct roads and bridges, and also to support the poor, and you stop not to inquire who is the owner; why is it less equitable to assess property to sustain a cause of such paramount importance as the education of the people. Better far that the prairie sloughs should be left unworked, that the poor should beg from door to door; than that no highways of knowledge should be constructed—that the sloughs of ignorance should be left unfilled, and the children become pigmies of men for lack of the bread of knowledge.

But some may say, there is no law against a man's paying for the support of schools; and if they really regard education as so important and profitable, and withal, are so liberal minded; why don't they give now, without waiting to have it compelled by law? A good and sufficient reason is, they have no guaranty that their money would be judiciously expended. Did they know the owners of adjoining property paid equally with themselves for a specific object, in which the neighborhood had a vital interest; they could trust to those whose money was united with their own, to see it all employed to the best advantage for the attainment of that object; for however carelessly we may use the bounty of others, we are careful of what is acquired by our own exertions.

IT IS JUST TO THE AGED.

There is still another class upon whom it is urged the school tax will press unequally—those passed the meridian of life, who have reared and educated a family, and, therefore, should not be taxed to educate the third generation. They surely should be interested in the education of their

grand-children, and if they have wealth to bestow, how could they do it better than in giving a good education. But there is no real force in the objection. We do not propose to tax the individual, but property. Any one having no property will pay no tax; and why, in the name of common sense, shall you single out the cause of education from all other public benefits, to exempt a man's property for paying the expense of its support? Is too much money raised? Is it squandered? Property does and should pay for sustaining public measures; and we can see no good reason for inquiring as to who the owner is, and what his circumstances, in collecting a school tax, that applies not with equal force to any other tax.

AN ASSESSMENT NECESSARY TO MAKE ALL PAY.

Then if schools affect the value of property, besides being of public utility, and it is right to compel individuals to pay for their support, according to their property in the State, how else, except by an assessment, can all be made to pay their just proportion? Men of large property are scattered all over the State, who will pay nothing for education, not even for schooling their own children, and there is no more justice in permitting them to go free of expense for schools, any more than for the support of government, or for any other public good. And how do those opposing a school tax, propose they shall pay.—Why, gratuitously. Gratuitously! Why don't you trust to the gratuity of such generous men to pay the salaries of your State officers? Why are laws for making and repairing roads enacted and enforced? All we ask is justice in behalf of education; and surely no one can consider our demands unreasonable, if we require only what is accorded to other public interests of no weightier importance. When all taxation is abandoned, then will the friends of education cease to solicit the privilege of taxing themselves to support their schools; and far distant be the day when they shall fail, and cease to importune your honorable bodies, to grant their requests.

NECESSARY TO MAKE NON-RESIDENTS PAY.

But if every citizen of Illinois would voluntarily pay his proportion of the expenses of popular education, still it would be the wisest policy to raise the necessary amount by a tax, deducting the income of our school funds. A very large amount of land is owned by non-residents; who seldom or never visit us, and are ignorant of the wants and claims of the people amongst whom they have property. And though they would talk finely of the glories of education, and promise largely, yet they are a long way off, and might disappoint our hopes. There is a way by which we can make sure of their proportion; and as it will cost us no more, except the expense of collection, to pay our part by a tax, than by voluntary donation; and as we have seen it is right to make all pay according to their property, let us adopt that method which will compel all property holders to pay equally.

INFLUENCE OF A TAX UPON THE USE OF PUBLIC MONEY.

Again; a tax should be levied to ensure the faithful use of the public money, both of that received from the State treasury, and the revenue of the township funds. We have been favored with most munificent grants from the General Government, and are bound to secure their em-

ployment in promoting the objects for which they were granted. In truth, the conveyances are but deeds of trust for a specific purpose, and as a State our honor is pledged for the faithful discharge of that trust. Permit us to say, with all respect, that as guardians of the public honor, you are not only bound to use these funds for educational purposes, but to employ them in the best possible manner, and to do all acts that will aid in making them more useful, or ensure their more faithful employment by the people. Less could not be expected of individuals, less should not satisfy us as a State. And if you have reason to believe that levying a tax would operate favorably in the use of the school money, does not the public faith stand pledged that such tax shall be levied?

In some States, the schools are wholly, or almost wholly, supported by taxation; and in nearly every State, with whose system we are acquainted, where legislative appropriations are made in aid of common schools, and where they have good, efficient systems, the people are required to raise a greater or less amount by a tax, and the avowed object is, to secure the judicious use of the public money by having it united with that of the people. They act upon the general principle, which is undoubtedly correct, that an object is prized, according to the labor bestowed in its acquisition. In Massachusetts and New York, where they are abundantly able to support free schools without a school tax, they require one to be laid, because they know by experience it is necessary. State appropriations are there made, to incite the people to exertion on their part, as well as to help them, and the same object should prevail here. These two States are reputed to have the best common schools of any in the Union, and to be considerably in advance of Connecticut, notwithstanding her immense school fund of more than two millions, which supports free schools in all parts of the State. And those who are qualified to judge, attribute the difference to the fact, that the former levy taxes and the latter does not. Experience, then, is in favor of taxation, and we err greatly if we take no heed to that experience. We know that in all sections of our State, the public money is not employed to the best advantage; that in numerous instances it has been grossly squandered, and in others not used for school purposes; and knowing the beneficial effects of taxation elsewhere, it would seem the least we can do, and maintain our plighted faith to the General Government, is to try what taxation will do here.

SCHOOL TAXATION IN OTHER STATES.

In Maine, each town is required to raise by tax forty cents for each inhabitant, or to "forfeit and pay a sum not less than twice nor more than four times the amount of such failure or deficiency, to be recovered by indictment, or in an action of debt, to the use of the person who may sue therefor." In 1838, the latest report we find, they should have raised by tax $159,784, and actually raised $180,593.

In Massachusetts, a town containing fifty families is required to maintain at least one school for not less than six months; one hundred families, not less than twelve months; and so on; and if these and all other provisions of the law are complied with, and a sum equal to $1 25 for each person between four and sixteen years of age, has been raised by tax to pay only for fuel, and wages and board of teacher; then the town is entitled

to receive its proportion of the State school fund. In 1843, the towns raised by taxation $510,592.

New Hampshire requires the selectmen of each town to levy an annual tax upon all property, equal to $1 57 on the hundred dollars, to be used "for the sole purpose of keeping an English school or schools."

The newly elected, and popular Executive of Pennsylvania, Governor SHUNK, when superintendent of schools in 1839, said in his report to the Legislature, "the great effective principle in our laws on this subject, is an annual State appropriation equal to one dollar to each taxable inhabitant of the State, to be paid to accepting districts, upon the condition that they levy a tax equal to about sixty-five cents upon each taxable inhabitant in their respective districts, which tax they are authorized to increase to treble this amount, if required to defray the expenses of education." In 1843, the State paid accepting districts $272,720; and they raised by tax $419,920. The law also requires non-accepting districts "to raise a sufficient sum by taxation, to educate for six months all the children in the district whose parents are too poor to pay for their schooling."

With regard to the propriety of a school tax, Gov. Shunk says, "the property in every district and county is perpetually changing owners. By the happy institutions of this country, where no artificial contrivances exist to retain estates in particular families, every species of property circulates with great rapidity. Under these circumstances, there can be no injustice, if only a short term of years is taken into view, in promoting the public good, by making the general property liable for the expenses of general education, without reference as to who may be the owners. Every man expects to acquire himself, or hopes that his descendants will acquire, a full share of the existing property; and no man, however large his possessions, who reflects by the light of experience, expects that all his descendants will be equally fortunate with himself; hence the hopes of the one and the fears of the other, present the strongest motives for all who love their offspring, to lay the deepest and most durable foundation, for securing to them a sound practical education."

In New York, for the payment of teachers, each town is required to raise by a tax, a sum equal to that received from the State, and by a vote of the inhabitants may raise twice as much, besides laying a tax for building or repairing school houses. Each district must keep at least one school not less than four months.

Ohio, in 1843, appropriated $200,000 to schools, and $99,814, was raised by a tax.

The Kentucky school law provides that a tax shall be levied upon the inhabitants of each district, sufficient with the money received from the common school fund to defray the expenses of the school.

Missouri and Indiana give the people the power to tax themselves for school purposes, and Michigan also. The policy of other States we are ignorant of.

A SCHOOL TAX EXPEDIENT IN ILLINOIS.

However imperfectly the arguments may have been presented, it appears to us there can be no question as to the justice and propriety of a school tax. The mere statement of the points of argument, leaving the filling up to any candid mind, must lead inevitably to this conclusion.

And the long continuance of this method for supporting schools in many States; their warm commendations of it; and above all, the excellence of their common schools, where they are wholly or partially supported by a tax; speaks to us in its favor in the strong language of experience. Their remains, then, nothing for Illinois to do, but to adopt the practice. If a school tax be right and necessary, it would seem the people should be required to raise one, and the legislature should trust to the good sense and honesty of the people to sustain them in enforcing it. This, we acknowledge, to be a natural and correct conclusion, and we have nothing to say by way of apology for suggesting a different course. We can only express regret, that the principle and efficacy of a school tax is probably not sufficiently understood by the people, to cause them to acquiesce in it if made imperative.

TO BE LEFT TO TOWNSHIPS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS.

Ends may be gained by pursuasion as well as compulsion, and there need be no compromise of principle in resorting to the former to the neglect of the latter. This we believe to be an instance in point. Taxation is so irksome, especially in view of an increase being necessary for State purposes, that if in the compulsory form it were engrafted upon the new school system, the whole might be made so odious to the people, that they would require its repeal before they had had sufficient opportunity to test its utility. We therefore propose that authority shall be given to each township to vote at its annual meeting whether a school tax shall be levied and how much; and to each school district to levy a tax for building or repairing a school house, and to raise a greater amount to pay the teacher's salary and incidental expenses, should more be necessary than the amount received from the township fund and tax. In each instance, however, some limitation should perhaps be provided. Numerous townships and districts will at once resort to taxation, and others will speedily follow their example; and should the plan of official organization herein recommended be adopted, and the offices be suitably filled, it will prove an effective means of inducing others to test the method, who otherwise would not, and who would neglect the requirements of a law that should enforce a school tax. Illinoians, like any other people who pride themselves so much upon their independence, may be led along step by step, and may be persuaded to adopt measures which could not have been compelled upon them.

WILL CALL AN ANNUAL SCHOOL MEETING.

One advantage occurs to us of leaving to the people to decide for themselves as to their school tax, and that is, it will bring together at the annual meeting every tax payer in the township. This question will touch them in their tender point—their pockets; and all will go to protect them. As the result, once each year there will be a regular school meeting when all the interests of education will naturally be brought forward and discussed, and the town superintendent and others, will have a rare chance to urge the adoption of measures necessary to the improvement of schools.

A MAJORITY VOTE SHOULD DECIDE.

At the last session of the Legislature, something of this character was introduced; but it was proposed to require a vote of two-thirds of the people of a township to levy a school tax. We do most earnestly pray your honorable bodies, to let the decision rest with a majority of the votes cast. Why should there be any fear of abuse under the law? Certainly there is no danger of having too good schools; that too much will be paid teachers; or that money will be squandered by those who themselves pay it. To require a two-thirds vote looks very much as though one or all of these results were to be feared; and even should the event, in an occasional instance, prove the apprehension to have been well grounded, is it not probable that ten townships or districts would suffer from lack of means to support their schools, where one would suffer from a super-abundance that had been raised by a tax. The people generally are not so fond of paying large sums for school purposes, that any great restraint need be cast around them. In other public measures, it is considered safe to trust to a majority to manage; and we can see no great danger in education, or of its too rapid promotion, that it should be singled out to be used with caution.

Our duties as the committee of the Peoria convention are now discharged after a fashion; and since commencing the preparation of the memorial, we have regretted more than ever, that it had not been committed to abler hands. The more this subject of common school instruction is dwelt upon, the more transcendingly important does it appear. Never can more be done for it, than is its due—never can it be estimated above its worth; and it is a source of the highest gratification to labor for its furtherance. We cannot refrain from expressing in this place our acknowledgments to the ardent friends of popular education, who constituted the Peoria convention, for according to us the distinguished honor of laying their views before the Legislature; and when we remember the superior talents of many other members, it appears remarkable—altogether a fortuitous circumstance—that we should have been selected. The subject is committed to your honorable bodies with the fullest confidence that it will receive at your hands the attention it merits; and that such measures will be adopted, as in your united wisdom will appear best calculated to promote the object of all objects—THE EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE.

While we rejoice in the republican motto, "Let the people rule," shall we ever forget that intelligence and virtue must be the actuating principles of our government? What but these constitute the base of the entire fabric of our republican institutions? Let our voters become ignorant, and how long before this glorious temple of liberty, the pride and rejoicing of all in the whole earth, who desire the moral and political elevation of our race, will lie prostrate with the republics of the old world! How long before the monarchies and despotisms of Europe will exult, that a light, increasing in its brightness till it already begins to illumine the dark places of their misrule, is extinguished forever! And let the solemn truth in thunder tones peal abroad through the length and breadth of our State; let it reverberate till every man's ears shall tingle; that even now one seventeenth part of our population over twenty years of age, can neither read nor write. What shall be done to stay the desolating

current of ignorance, that unopposed will augment its force in an increasing ratio from year to year, till it shall sweep resistlessly before it, all of our inestimable social blessings, to establish which have cost such treasures of energy and life. And let it come home to us, that the district school supplies the means—the only means—of qualifying at least nineteen-twentieths of the children of our State, to exercise the right of suffrage; that this is the means the only means—by which nineteen-twentieths of the men—yes, and the wives and mothers too—soon to be on the stage of action, are to be prepared for discharging the high and responsible duties of life.

Our object is "not to rear a small number of individuals, who may be regarded as prodigies in an ignorant and admiring age; but to diffuse as widely as possible that degree of cultivation, which may enable the bulk of the people to possess all the intellectual and moral improvement of which their nature is susceptible." It is too true that schooling does not always accomplish this; that men do not become educated according to their attendance upon school. Occasionally we find one who signs a deed with his mark, better educated, better qualified to perform the duties of a man and citizen than another who passed all the days of his boyhood and youth at the school house, academy or college. But these instances are only exceptions to the general rule. No father, worthy of the name, would desire to try the experiment with his son. The mechanical operations of reading and writing, and instructions in elementary branches of knowledge, will be imparted to him as the ground-work of future usefulness; and to acquire them, the great mass must resort to the district school. For this the district school is prized; for this we would, as far as in our power, compel all to render it support and countenance. We would, if possible, have no school too good for the child of humble origin; none too poor for the child of wealth and affluence. Here should all factitious distinctions of society be levelled in the dust, no aristocracy should here hold sway but that of intellect.

"SELECT SCHOOLS" AND ACADEMIES TO BE DISCOUNTENANCED.

And here permit us to say one word upon the propriety and necessity of discountenancing the erection of those nurseries of pomposity and contemptible vanity, yclept "select schools" or academies. They may be of occasional advantage to individuals, but they are a positive curse to the public in such a population as exists generally in Illinois. They absorb the support which is absolutely essential to the existence of the common school; and though they may furnish advantages, better in some respects than the ordinary district school, yet it is at largely increased expense, so that only the more wealthy will avail themselves of it. In consequence, the school by which the great majority are to be educated, is left to eke out a sickly existence, if indeed it exist at all, uncared for by those who have time and means to bestow in its support; when the same expense and labor given to it, which is given from nothing but foolish vanity to the "select school," would make the former nearly or quite as good for the children of the wealthy, besides furnishing the same means of education to numbers equally as worthy, who otherwise could not have good instruction.

In our view, it is very questionable whether the granting of charters to

academies, &c., in various parts of the State, will not prove a serious evil, by retarding improvement in common schools. Should the foregoing system be adopted by the Legislature, and receive favor at the hands of the people, great progress will have been made. But it is only commencing the onward march of improvement. These will be succeeded by other efforts, till ultimately we shall see the common school elevated to the position it is worthy of occupying; and by establishing a gradation of schools, supported by the same system, open alike to all as they shall progress in their studies, the highest desires for instruction, short of a collegiate course shall be satisfied; and from the elementary to the higher branches of study, the child of the cottage and of the palace, shall meet on terms of perfect equality, except as one excels the other in scholarship. The plan is feasible, and in time must be—will be—accomplished.

JOHN S. WRIGHT, *of Cook.*
D. J. PINKNEY, *of Ogle.*
H. M. WEAD, *of Fulton.*

Chicago, 28th December, 1844.

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